

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /060 W
-----024249 162127Z /72

R 161954Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4319
INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 01355

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: THE MAJORITY -- THE POT BOILS

SUMMARY: THE RPR'S SIMMERING DISCONTENT WITH ITS
MAJORITY PARTNERS REACHED THE BOILING POINT LAST WEEK
WITH A CLEAR WARNING TO THEM TO STOP PLAYING ELECTORAL
GAMES OR FACE THE CONSEQUENCES. THE CONSEQUENCES
WOULD BE RPR RUNNING ADDITIONAL CANDIDATES TO
COMPETE WITH ITS PARTNERS IN VOTING DISTRICTS ASSIGNED
TO THE CENTER -- A MOVE WHICH COULD MEAN AN ALL OUT
BATTLE AND THE POSSIBLE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE CENTRISTS
TO LEND SUBSTANCE TO THEIR WARNING, THE RPR DESIGNATED
10 NEW CANDIDATES TO OPPOSE THE LEADERS OF THE
REPUBLICANS, CENTRISTS AND RADICAL SOCIALISTS.
A NEW POLL TO BE PUBLISHED JANUARY 17 SHOWS THE
MAJORITY SLIPPING FURTHER BEHIND. END SUMMARY.

1. FACED WITH AN INCREASINGLY CONCERTED EFFORT
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BY THEIR PARTNERS TO REDUCE THEIR STRENGTH THROUGH
COMPETITION IN THE PRIMARIES, THE RPR POLITICAL
COMMITTEE LASHED OUT LAST WEEK AT THE PR, CDS AND
RADICALS, ACCUSING THEM OF FORMING AN ANTI-GAULLIST
FRONT WITHIN THE MAJORITY. THE REASON FOR THE RPR
ATTACK WAS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SINGLE LIST OF CAN-
DIDATES REPRESENTING THE THREE PARTIES TO OPPOSE THE

RPR IN THE PRIMARIES. THIS LIST, PREPARED UNDER THE GENERAL SUPERVISION OF PRIME MINISTER BARRE, CARRIED WITH IT THE THREAT OF AT LEAST AN IMPLIED ENDORSEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRIME MINISTER. BARRE HIMSELF HAD LAYED THE GROUNDWORK FOR SUCH AN APPROACH BY SAYING THAT GISCARD LIKE DE GAULLE WOULD APPEAL TO THE FRENCH PEOPLE TO GIVE HIM A MAJORITY THAT WOULD ENABLE HIM TO CARRY OUT HIS PROGRAM. SECOND, THERE WAS AT LEAST A POTENTIAL THREAT THAT THE LIST WOULD PRESENT PR, CENTRIST OR RADICAL CANDIDATES IN DISTRICTS WHICH THE RPR HAD PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED THEIR EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY -- SINGLE RPR MAJORITY CANDIDATES.

2. THE COMMON PR/CDS/RS LIST PRESENTED ON SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, LIVED UP TO RPR FEARS. THE LIST CONTAINED THE NAMES OF 363 CANDIDATES CHOSEN TO REPRESENT THE THREE PARTIES. IT ALSO INCLUDED TWO CANDIDACIES IN DISTRICTS PREVIOUSLY RESERVED TO THE RPR. THE LIST POINTEDLY DID NOT LIST THE PARTY AFFILIATION OF THE CANDIDATES, LEAVING THE DOOR OPEN FOR ITS DESIGNATION AS A "PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY" LIST FOR ENDORSEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT AND THE PRIME MINISTER.

3. ON SUNDAY, THE RPR RETALIATED BY NAMING AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ADDITIONAL 10 CANDIDATES TO OPPOSE THE LEADERS OF THE THREE PARTY COALITION AND THREATENED MORE IF THE

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THREE PERSISTED IN THEIR EFFORT TO REDUCE THE ELECTORAL STRENGTH OF THE RPR. RPR CANDIDATES WERE NAMED TO OPPOSE SOISSON, SEC. GEN. OF THE PR; STASI, VP OF THE CDS; ROSSI, RADICAL SOCIALIST MINISTER OF COMMERCE; AND A SELECTION OF OTHERS FOR WHOM OPPOSITION BY THE RPR COULD CAUSE PROBLEMS. THE RPR POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS JUST THE FIRST LIST AND OTHER CANDIDATES COULD ALSO BE NAMED LATER.

4. SUBSEQUENT TO THE RPR COUNTER-ATTACK, THE LEADERS OF THE OTHER MAJORITY PARTIES DISCLAIMED ANY INTENT TO SPLIT THE MAJORITY SAYING THAT THE COMMON LIST WAS DESIGNED TO PREVENT A MULTIPLICITY OF MAJORITY CANDIDATES IN VOTING DISTRICTS WHICH COULD SPLIT THE VOTE TO THE POINT THAT NONE OF THE MAJORITY CANDIDATES RECEIVED THE 12.5 PERCENT REQUIRED FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND ROUND. SECOND, THEY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STATED THAT THE PRESENCE OF THE RADICALS IN THE MEETING AND ON THE LIST WAS BASED ON THEIR INTENT TO ENLARGE THE MAJORITY AND ADD THE EXTRA FEW PERCENT NEEDED FOR A MAJORITY VICTORY.

5. ON MONDAY, THE 16TH, THE LEADERS OF ALL THE PARTIES SUPPORTING THE PRESIDENT (INCLUDING THE RPR) HAD LUNCH AT THE ELYSEE. THE PRESIDENT APPEALED FOR UNITY, BUT HOW MUCH EFFECT THIS WILL HAVE IS NOT YET KNOWN. THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE GAULLIST RPR AND THE GISCARDIAN-CENTRIST PARTIES IS NOW OUT IN THE OPEN. A POLL TO BE PUBLISHED BY FIGARO TOMORROW WILL SHOW THAT THE MAJORITY HAS SLIPPED TO 44 PERCENT (FROM 46-47) WHILE THE LEFT HAS HELD STEADY AT 51 PERCENT (5 PERCENT ECOLOGISTS, GAULLISTS OF THE LEFT, ECT.). THE RPR IS POLLING 21 PERCENT WHILE THE PR HOLDS AT 16 PERCENT; THE CENTRISTS ARE

CREDITED WITH 7 PERCENT. THE WARNING TO THE
MAJORITY IS CLEAR, THEY ARE SLIPPING AND CANNOT
AFFORD THIS TYPE OF FACTIONAL INFIGHTING. WHETHER
OR NOT THEY WILL HEED THE WARNING REMAINS TO BE
SEEN.
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